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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3487  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000470

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: N. KIVU GOVERNOR POLITICAL POSITIONING

REF: KINSHASA 0101

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) During a February 28 dinner in Goma (North Kivu Province) Governor Eugene Serufuli asserted to the Ambassador his confidence about the electoral future of North Kivu. Serufuli indicated that he has been coordinating with President Kabila and his staff, ostensibly regarding handling of the crisis centered on recent insurgent military activity associated with renegade general Laurent Nkunda. Serufuli obliquely implied, however, that he has been reaching some political agreements as well. The Ambassador noted numerous signs around Goma of an expected Presidential visit to Goma. Serufuli confirmed that is the case, appeared sanguine about the prospect, and acknowledged that Kabila would likely receive a good reception in Goma.

¶2. (C) Regarding Nkunda, Serufuli appears to have hardened his position following the late January/February insurgent activity centered on Rutshuru, (reftel) and described what he sought to characterize as his own central role in helping defuse the immediate crisis. Serufuli outlined plans to move former ANC (Note: the former army of the RCD-Goma party) troops out of the area Nkunda uses as a base, reducing Nkunda's armed protection. Serufuli predictably characterized his own role as key to this effort, but did note that he is working closely with military district commander Amisi and MONUC forces regarding the problem. Serufuli reported four of six battalions had already been moved to another town in the province, with more to follow. Serufuli concurred on the need to arrest Nkunda, albeit in a manner that does not destabilize the tenuous order of the province. Asked from what source Nkunda continued to draw support, Serufuli thought that the former FARDC 5th integrated brigade commander had been diverting funds to Nkunda, and also noted reports that exile politician Katete Kototo may be providing support as well.

¶3. (C) Serufuli stated that while he has coordinated his actions with Kabila, RCD-Goma President (and DRC Vice President) Ruberwa had not been particularly helpful, indeed perhaps a bit of a problem.

¶4. (C) In the political arena, Serufuli did not profess to be particularly concerned about any political threat posed by declared Presidential candidate Pierre Pay Pay, who is also from the Kivus. Nor did he express particular concern about northern North Kivu-based Mbusa Nyamwisi, current DRC Regional Cooperation Minister, although Serufuli avoided much specific discussion of Mbusa.

¶5. (C) A variety of other Goma business and community leaders in other meetings in Goma confirmed to the Ambassador that

RCD-Goma President Ruberwa,s influence has all but vanished in North Kivu. Many, however, were unsure about Serufuli,s own position, particularly in the most northern reaches of the province where Mbusa holds sway.

16. (C) Comment: While Serufuli is in theory Ruberwa,s deputy in the RCD-Goma party hierarchy, it is clear that he has long been working to marginalize Ruberwa in his province. It appears he has largely succeeded. Serufuli,s statements of regret over Ruberwa,s supposed lack of helpfulness in dealing with Nkunda in fact are more likely simply signs of Serufuli,s continuing efforts to discredit Ruberwa. It is widely believed in Kinshasa that Kabila and his staff have been seeking to broker some political deals in North Kivu with Serufuli, and Serufuli,s demeanor and statements at the dinner would tend to confirm this is the case. Kabila is counting on major voting support in the Kivus and would be happy to see further divisions within RCD-Goma. For his part, Serufuli, a Hutu, may be counting on a working deal with Kabila to help provide support among various Kivu ethnic groups for Serufuli,s gubernatorial candidacy. Serufuli,s professed lack of particular concern about Mbusa,s rival political support in the north may have been bravado, or may reflect some confidence that a deal with Kabila will help to neutralize Mbusa, whose base is among North Kivu,s Nande community. Regarding Nkunda, Serufuli has repeatedly told us for months that he supports arresting Nkunda, but in fact Serufuli appeared reasonably content with the existing situation. The Rutshuru clashes may have changed that position. Serufuli is fully capable of changing political directions at will in whatever manner appears expedient. For now, at least, he appears to want to go to elections, a positive factor in helping to maintain order in the province,

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and he seems convinced that an understanding with Kabila best serves his interests - at least until after the elections.  
End comment.

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